

**THE BALLAD OF
HADJI, AND
OTHER POEMS**

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The Ballad of Hadji, And Other Poems by Ian Hamilton

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IAN HAMILTON

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BY
IAN HAMILTON



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THE BALLAD OF HÁDJI AND THE
BOAR.

As I rode over the dusty waste
My dainty Arab's hoof-strokes traced
Glad rhythms in my mind,
Which seemed to murmur unto me
How he and I were lone and free
As wide Sahara's wind.

My heart beat high—the sun was bright—
And, as a beacon's startling light
Proclaims a threatening war,
My burnished lance-point met the glare
And flashed and sparkled in the air—
A pale and glancing star.

THE BALLAD OF HÁDJI

I saw a hawk pass hovering
Through the azure heights, on balanced wing ;
Its shadow fell down sheer
Upon my path, then onwards sped,
Smoother than gliding skaters tread
A fastly-frozen mere.

Thus heedless I, when suddenly
My Hádji broke the reverie
By stamping on the ground,
Whilst from a brake where grasses rank
Embraced the margin of a tank,
There came a rustling sound :

No long suspense ;—his bloodshot eyes
Aflame with sullen, fierce surprise—
Stepped out a grisly boar :
His gloomy aspect seemed to say—
“ No other has the right to stray
Along this marsh-bound shore.”

Now I had seen the life blood gush
From many a boar of nine-inch tush,
And so had Hádji too ;
But never I ween had we either seen
So great a beast, so gaunt and lean,
So ugly to the view.

With others by to help at need,
Or give success applausive meed,
'Tis easy to be brave.
But when a man must do alone
Each danger seems more dismal grown ;
Each petty ditch a grave.

And so—although the spear-point dropped—
As still as effigy I stopped,
Nor gave my steed the spur ;
The more I looked, more gruesome grew
This king of all the swinish crew ;
More prudence made demur.

4 *THE BALLAD OF HÁDJI*

But, as I hung in anguished doubt,
The marsh-born tyrant turned about,
As weary of the play ;
He turned and dashed adown the glade
(No phantom now or goblin shade)
The well-known grisly gray :

And doubt no more distressed my mind ;
In twenty years I'd never find
Such trophy to my lance,
For turning he had let me see
His tusks gigantic—shame 'twould be
If I had lost the chance.

I dropped my hand ; when Hádji knew
The slackened rein away he flew
Across the belt of ooze ;
The slim reeds rustled—till he sprang
Out on the plain whose surface rang
Beneath his iron shoes.